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THE COMMONWEAL

A WEEKLY REVIEW OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, LITERATURE AND THE ARTS

An Immense Task

TWO RECENT statements, in the nature of warnings, may serve to indicate the perilous course which reason and this nation must follow in the Age of Overkill. That course, as this magazine has steadily maintained, can only be for the United States to continue to strive for a superiority and flexibility of nuclear defenses at the same time that it seeks every possible means to secure a feasible test-ban treaty with the Soviet Union. Obviously, it is a course marked at every turn by danger and tension; but the alternatives to it are apocalyptic, to say the least. To maneuver it well requires foresight and balance.

The first of the statements relating to the maintenance of this course was contained in a report to the Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Maxwell D. Taylor. It was a warning against the dangers of a "nuclear stalemate mentality" in the present military situation. That mentality would see peace maintained chiefly by reason of the "balance of terror," where the matching enormity of the United States' and the Soviet Union's weapons systems would make it impossible for either to gain in a nuclear war and hence, supposedly, insure that neither would use their weapons.

Actually, as General Taylor indicated, the "balance of terror" is kept because of the United States' just-superior forces, a superiority which the Soviet Union is determined to nullify. At the same time that the Soviet Army's supporting air force is being improved by additions of new high-performance tactical missiles, the Soviet Navy is being augmented with nuclear submarines, weapons in which the Russians have lagged. Clearly, the Soviet Union does not have stalemate in mind, but superiority, which is still a meaningful notion, if only in terms of propaganda.

The idea of stalemate as the current object of defense policy is in fact a very dangerous one, based upon a very dubious psychology. Significantly, General Taylor's statement was made in support of the staggering military budget of forty-nine billion dollars. Staggering as it is, however, the weight of his remarks requires an unremitting effort on the part of the United States to keep its strength and flexibility in the face of major Soviet efforts.

"We must not think in terms of static nuclear stalemate," General Taylor said, "but in terms of dynamic progress and flexible adaptation in meeting the changing requirements for superiority in the strategic nuclear field." We are, contrary to the opinion of some, not playing a game; but in any case stalemate would be a losing one.

Perhaps it is not so much the myth of "stalemate" which General Taylor exposed in his remarks, as the myth of "peace through stalemate." The idea that peace could be ensured through the mutual fear of annihilation in a world of multiplying nuclear powers is surely one of the most delusive. At best it can give some temporary comfort; at worst it represents a debasement of the very idea of peace.

IT IS in this respect that the second warning, President Kennedy's recent comment that "time is running out" on efforts to reach a test-ban treaty, must be taken to heart. He said this in connection with Premier Khrushchev's predictable rebuff to the recent British-United States representation in Moscow for a "summit" conference on nuclear testing and disarmament.

Regardless of the continued frustration at Geneva, it must not be forgotten that some progress has been made in securing from the Soviets an agreement on on-site inspection. Moreover, while Khrushchev rejected the idea of a summit conference, he did not deny either the desirability of a treaty or the possibility of renewed negotiations on the diplomatic level, where they seem to have the best chance of success anyway.

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There is the chance that a real misunderstanding over how many inspections the United States demanded caused the latest talks to break off without success. If that is the case, then every effort should be made to clear up that point now. The United States has been insisting upon seven inspections per year, whereas the Soviet Union will allow three at most. But there are unconfirmed reports of new proposals whereby the West would urge thirty inspections over seven years. That would average out to four per year. The United States has always maintained that the number of the inspections is subordinate to the point of their effectiveness. Hopefully the flexibility of bargaining that that allows will be exploited to the fullest in the near future.

A nuclear test-ban and the eventual disarmament that it would herald is the world's best hope for a peace which shall be worthy of the name. It is in this spirit that Pope John exhorted in *Pacem in Terris* that "the fundamental principle on which our present peace depends must be replaced by another, which declares that the true and solid peace of nations consists not in equality of arms, but in mutual trust alone." Here the Pope spoke of "an immense task incumbent on all men of good will, the task of bringing about true peace in the order established by God."

Passports and Due Process

IN 1958, in the case of *Kent vs. Dulles*, the Supreme Court held that "the freedom to travel is a part of the 'liberty' of which the citizen cannot be deprived without due process of law." Since that decision, both the Eisenhower and the Kennedy Administrations have sought in various ways to implement it. Most recently, the State Department in a memorandum of January 12, 1962, gave those denied passports because of suspected membership in the Communist Party the right to review evidence against them and to confront informants. Since that memorandum, the F.B.I. has apparently chosen to shield its informants rather than oppose the issuance of passports to suspected Communists.

Predictably enough, there were many who deplore the court decision as well as the State Department memorandum. Among the critics is Mrs. Frances G. Knight, director of the Passport Office. In her view, reportedly, passports are being issued to "undercover Communists engaged in espionage, sabotage and sedition." Just how accurate her judgment is cannot easily be determined; the important thing at the moment is that she has recently been giving testimony before closed sessions of the Senate Internal Security subcommittee.

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Doubtless it is the right of the subcommittee to hear what she has to say; and her right to make her case. But it is hard to support the subcommittee's refusal to make available to the State Department a transcript of her testimony. As likely as not, the issue at stake is, in the words of one Administration official, "an ideological argument." And it can be supposed that Miss Knight finds some sympathetic listeners among the members of the subcommittee: the idea of "due process" for suspected Communists is a novel one for a good segment of our population.

However novel, "due process" is the right of every citizen; the fact that he may or may not be a Communist has no bearing on that right. For that reason, the thinking of the Supreme Court on the issuance of passports seems to us as sound now as it did in 1958. The 1962 State Department memorandum was no less sound; "due process" inevitably involves risks for a free society. But it remains, on a deeper level, a crucial ingredient of a free society.

Nasser's Way

IN HIS DRIVE to unite and head the Arab world under the banner of socialism Colonel Nasser has to contend with the firm determination of Israel and the resistance of the two remaining Arab kings. But Jordanian demonstrations hard upon the concluding of the Egypt-Syria-Iran treaty show that brave King Hussein's throne continues to be in gravest jeopardy. Nasser could doubtless overturn it any day were it not for his fear of provoking Israel to armed action. King Saud of Saudi Arabia has much greater numbers of loyal tribesmen to count on and an economy based on substantial oil revenues.

Colonel Nasser's forces recently experienced much difficulty before finally overthrowing the royalist forces of the small state of Yemen. Within the committed Arab countries the Nasser program has anything but clear sailing. His followers in both Syria and Iraq have to cooperate with the strong local socialist-nationalists; theoretically a union of the three pledged countries could emerge within six months, but it is hardly expected to be effective for at least two years.

Nasser also is confronted by characteristic Arab instabilities. His difficulties in providing sustenance for his own people are immense. His troops gave a poor account of themselves in the war with Israel in 1948; they were similarly unimpressive in the Suez crisis of 1956; their expedition to Yemen hardly comprised a demonstration of military prowess. Because of serious weaknesses Nasser's Egypt does not appear to pose an immediate threat to peace.

At longer range the prospect is quite different. How could Israel with its two and a third millions stand up against the many millions of an ultimately united and developed Arab federation? Even today sentiment for Arab unity, and in support of Nasser, is widespread outside the new U.A.R. German scientists are hard at work building up a modern Egyptian air force and ground- to-ground missiles to be aimed at Israel. (The latter, it is believed, will be one of the first outside the present nuclear club to develop its own atom bomb.) The Arab states have all along been vowed to sweep Israel into the sea. Not surprisingly, the new treaty of union calls in so many words for the destruction of Israel.

On its fifteenth anniversary the State of Israel can look with justified pride on its many accomplishments: it has made itself self-sufficient in food, increased national production fivefold and exports tenfold and built an impressive educational system, by democratic methods. Yet it has more than held up its end of the precarious balance of power in the Middle East. Eventually a showdown with its mortal enemy seems inevitable. That would threaten the peace of the whole world. It underlines the urgency of tangible progress toward thermonuclear disarmament and for a build-up of the peace-preserving machinery of the United Nations sufficient to meet such an impending major crisis.

Housing Bias

THE EXECUTIVE order by President Kennedy to prevent racial discrimination in housing aided by the federal government was hailed in November as the first broad use of government power in behalf of residential desegregation. Increasingly, however, the emphasis is on the word "first" rather than on the word "broad." The order covers only a quarter of new housing, omits savings and loan mortgage institutions, and does not affect existing housing at all. Interracial groups that expressed their disappointment in November are even more disappointed after six months of observing the results.

Now, with the approval of President Kennedy, the chairman of the President's Committee on Equal Opportunity in Housing has made public a proposal to widen federal efforts against discrimination. The proposal is for a Presidential directive banning new military bases, space installations and some other government facilities from areas where housing discrimination exists. Whether the President is willing to sign such an order is a matter for some interesting speculation. Certainly a great deal of political pressure will be marshaled against it. The kind of installations involved are economic life blood to many states, particularly to the states most likely to

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resent it. Nevertheless the directive would be a legitimate use of executive authority and a welcome step toward the end of housing discrimination.

The Layman's Role

A MONTH AGO Archbishop Lawrence J. Shehan announced his decision to make laymen members of the governing body of each parish in the Archdiocese of Baltimore. This plan is not unprecedented; the Archbishop himself introduced a similar plan in Bridgeport, Conn., some time ago. It is, however, worthy of attention as a representative attempt to focus the current emphasis on the role of the layman by offering laymen a managerial role in the Church.

In the last several years, many bishops in the U.S. and Canada have appointed laymen to diocesan school boards, ecumenical commissions and liturgical committees. At least one—Cardinal Cushing—has announced that the laity will play a part in a forthcoming diocesan synod. These cases, however, are still comparatively rare, and it must be said that despite the flood of literature on "the emerging layman," there has been little printed comment on what sort of role the layman might play within the organizational structure of the Church. If it is becoming less and less controversial to say that the layman is "a partner in the Church," as Cardinal Léger puts it, how is this partnership to be realized, for instance, in the administration and development of the parish?

The Baltimore plan is one answer to this question. Each parish is to be a separate corporation with five directors: the Archbishop, the Vicar-General, the pastor and two laymen named by the Archbishop. Since the pastor and laymen form a quorum, they may meet without the Archbishop and Vicar-General, whose presence would apparently be rare. There are however, two important provisos: the Archbishop's signature will be required on every note to borrow money, and the tenure of the laymen will be at the pleasure of the Archbishop, *i.e.*, he will be able to remove them at any time. Thus the plan reflects the opposite pull of two strong desires: first, to involve the laity in the administration of the parish, and second, to erect safeguards against a repetition of the lay trusteeism that plagued the American Church over a century ago.

The tension here is real. The temptation is for the layman to feel that he has no voice in running his own parish, and that plans like Archbishop Shehan's merely give the illusion of shared administration, while real decisions remain with bishop and pastor. The temptation for the pastor is to see the call for shared responsibility as an attempt to undermine his authority and introduce a false concept of democracy into the Church. It is easy for a pastor to view the situation in terms of lay trusteeism, while an unhappy parishioner is thinking about an arbitrary and unconventional Mass schedule or a new school that "everybody but the pastor wants."

At this point there is no need to say that the views of responsible parishioners should be taken into account by pastors. The role of public opinion within the Church—or as Cardinal Cushing said last week, "the lay person's . . . right to expect that his opinions will be treated with respect"—has received heavy emphasis in the last few years. But there has been no comparable emphasis on an administrative role for laymen in the parish. The Baltimore plan is an attempt to come to grips with the question by defining, at least partially, an area for laymen to take part in parish decisions. It suggests, too, that we re-think the arguments about trusteeism and the degree to which the pastor's authority is bound up with the temporal aspects of running a parish.

WASHINGTON REPORT

Opinion at the Grass-Roots

REPORTERS who interviewed Congressmen returning from their home districts after the recent Easter recess received almost uniformly the same general impressions from members of both parties and from all sections of the country. First, President Kennedy is personally very popular. He remains a favorite to win re-election next year. Second, the Kennedy legislative program does not arouse vehement support or angry opposition. Third, the people are upset about Russian influence in Cuba, but this concern may not produce political dividends for the Republicans because it is largely offset by the fear of another nuclear crisis. Nobody is keen to relive that frightening week of last October. Fourth, most people would like to have their taxes reduced, but the Kennedy tax program has not evoked the positive support one might have expected. And, finally, most people are content with the level of prosperity and just hope that nothing will disturb the general tenor of their lives.

This quiet political atmosphere conditions the way in which the President and Congress approach domestic affairs. One could, of course, dissent to the accuracy of these general impressions about the country's mood, but since most of the politicians and the press accept them, they constitute a major political fact, whether

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accurate or not. What follows in this report is an attempt to understand the sources of this quiet atmosphere.

Probably the deepest source is the fear of nuclear war. Since people envisage nuclear war as a total catastrophe from which there will be no recovery, this is not a normal fear that impels one to take positive, rational measures to avoid it or prepare for it. There is almost no interest, for example, in civil defense. Instead, this fear is linked to a half-conscious, fatalistic conviction that nuclear war, whether we will it or not, is sure to come. This union of fear and fantasy engenders apathy about public affairs.

Americans, by tradition, have been optimistic, assertive, confident. As a nation of activists, we are not prepared to accept consciously any *fin de siècle* mood such as swept the intellectuals of western Europe at the end of the nineteenth century, or any spirit of cynical frivolity in the midst of despair such as characterized Berlin in the late 1920's as Hitler rose to power. Rather, as a people we repress our anxieties and fantasies. We rally to a confident young President who promises us that we shall not only survive but that there will, indeed, be a new frontier if we just get moving again with vigor. We respond to the feats of John Glenn and the other astronauts which signal to us the deeply reassuring message that the familiar American combination of practical intelligence and simple masculine heroism are still triumphant in the space age.

Nevertheless, a fatalism, although unacknowledged, moves through the roots of our common life and expresses itself—among other ways—in the pervasive apathy of our politics. The only real question our people ask our national leaders today is: Can you keep the peace? Any President who maintains peace in the nuclear age is automatically adjudged a successful President by his fellow citizens. Political commentators severely condemned many of General Eisenhower's major specific policies, but because he kept the peace his hold on the people was unshakable. If the Constitution had permitted, he could easily have been elected to a third term. When he announced at the height of the Suez and Hungarian crises in 1956 that no involvement of American troops would be necessary, his prospective majority in that year's election probably doubled.

President Kennedy today can effectively silence partisan critics of his Cuban record by recalling his success in last fall's nuclear showdown with Khrushchev and then asking of his critics, as he did at his April 24 news conference, whether "the United States should go to war in order to remove Castro." Except for Senator Goldwater, no Republican critic has come anywhere near calling for warlike action against Cuba, and none is likely to make such a proposal. President Kennedy cannot escape some present and future political damage from the Cuban problem, but he will survive it because he can invoke the invulnerable defense that he kept the peace.

ON A MUCH LESS profound but still important level, the disposition of political forces in Congress accounts for the calm political atmosphere. Voters who want action on specific domestic reforms such as medical care for the aged, aid for education, or civil rights have already done about all they can by electing a liberal President and liberal majorities in the House and Senate. There is no use in these voters bombarding their own Representatives or Senators with mail or petitions of protest because in most instances the latter already share their views. This was not true during most of the Truman and Eisenhower Administrations when there was a substantial bloc of conservatives in office from the East and Middle West. But the conservative Senators elected in 1946 and re-elected in 1952 were generally retired by the Democratic landslide of 1958. For the past five years, the Senate has had the biggest liberal majority since the height of the New Deal.

Mr. Kennedy's difficulties in putting through his program center in the House and even there not with the rank-and-file of members but with certain key committee chairmen. It does no good for ordinary citizens to write to Rep. Howard Smith of Virginia or Rep. Otto Passman of Louisiana. It does not even do much good for President Kennedy to call them on the telephone. The existence of this stalemate in the House produced by the anti-democratic features of its committee and seniority systems is widely appreciated. It has produced a corresponding sense of frustration and apathy.

A third reason for the prevailing calm is the intellectual emptiness of much of the current debate over domestic issues. It is not really possible to mount a respectable argument against several of Mr. Kennedy's proposals. When social security has worked smoothly and successfully for more than twenty-five years, how can one reasonably oppose its extension to include medical care? When Britain and every other civilized, industrial country raises and lowers tax rates routinely to meet changing economic needs, how can one resonably oppose a revision of our tax rates? In truth, there are no intellectually interesting arguments against these proposals and consequently no interesting political controversy.

The only source of liveliness on the conservative side of our politics today is from the neo-fundamentalists who write *National Review* and the editorial page of the *Wall Street Journal*. And these dissenters have in mind such ambitious dismantling projects for the welfare state that tax bills and medical care for the aged dwindle to comparative insignificance.

WILLIAM V. SHANNON

(William V. Shannon is The Commonweal's regular correspondent in Washington.)

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Point and Counterpoint

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL of Churches has just published an itemized reply to Catholic arguments for federal aid to parochial schools. Commissioned by the Council's Department of Religious Liberty and called "Public Funds for Parochial Schools?" the study was written by George La Noue of Yale, who took forty-seven pages to say No to his own question.

I feel about the study the way the timid curate is supposed to have felt about his breakfast egg: parts of it are good enough, or at least they could have been worse. But I see no signs of the creative thinking both sides need to do on this issue.

The National Council study takes up arguments made in the 1961 brief of the National Catholic Welfare Conference. The Catholic brief argued that parochial schools perform a public function by teaching secular subjects such as mathematics and science; it saw no Constitutional reason why parochial schools could not receive public assistance to the degree proportionate to the value of the public service performed. Not so, says the Protestant study; textbooks in Catholic schools and indeed the entire atmosphere are so saturated with Catholicism that it would be impossible to separate religious subjects from secular.

Catholics argue that Catholic parents pay "double taxation" when they support the public schools while paying tuition to parochial schools. Not so, says the Protestant booklet; public schools taxes are not "use" taxes and public schools are supported by many people who do not get direct benefit from them.

Catholics argue that their constitutionally guaranteed freedom of religion is impaired if an economic disability is attached to its exercise, as in the case of the schools. Not so, says the National Council study; religious liberty in America consists in people's freedom to achieve their religious goals without help or interference by the state, and Catholic financial sacrifices for schools are no different from the financial sacrifices other people make for different religious goals.

And so it goes. The use of federal funds for parochial schools would undermine our historic ideal of separation of church and state; violate both federal and state constitutions; severely damage, if not destroy, our public school system. There was confrontation, I suppose it could be said, but no dialogue. Indeed, the only positive proposal advanced was that in favor of the shared-time plan, and I just hope all the nay-saying that went before will not prejudice Catholic readers against it.

To my mind, the shared-time plan deserves study on its merits, by Protestants and Jews as well as Catholics. It should not be considered just an alternative to federal aid.

Under shared time, children now in religious schools would take a substantial portion of their training in the public schools. Mathematics, science, language training and literature, for example, might be carried out in the "neutral" school. This would be supplemented by emphasis in the religious school on any aspect of those subjects that seemed desirable, in addition to the usual formal religious education, but a major part of the child's education in "secular" subjects would be carried out in the public school.

Conversely, I take it that many children now in the public school would attend some courses in the religious school. This would mean that children now receiving little or no formal religious education would begin to receive it in a serious and systematic way. From a Catholic point of view, this would mean that the approximately fifty per cent of our children who are not now in Catholic schools would receive a far better religious education than they get today.

But the consequences for Protestants and Jews would be even more striking, and this is important. All Americans, and not just Catholics, confront a problem in the matter of religious education. The difference is that Catholics know it and that Protestants and Jews have not yet realized how serious the problem is. The plain fact is that millions of American children are growing up with little or no serious contact with their religious roots, and this is or should be a matter of concern to all of us.

Shared time recognizes that we differ in religious beliefs; at the same time it plays down unnecessary divisiveness and stresses that we need as much unity as we can get without sacrificing essential differences. Shared time would allow the neutral school to concentrate on academic excellence, while permitting the religious school to supply the added dimension of religious insight. Indeed, in practice it might be that shared time would permit a better integration of religion into all subjects than we now achieve, however lofty our theory. Shared time would eliminate the complaint of Catholic parents that they pay "double taxation"; at the same time it should end once and for all the charge that Catholic parents are not interested in the public school. Most of all, though, shared time is a serious attempt to cope with the increasingly grave problem of religious illiteracy, and this should commend it to all concerned about the relationship between religion and education.

For all these reasons I'd like to see more experimentation with the shared-time plan. I just hope its constant citation as an alternative to federal aid does not put too many Catholics off.

JAMES O'GARA

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The Decrease in Contemporary Working Hours Is Vastly Overrated

The Uses of Leisure

RONALD GROSS

WE ALL know that Protestant Western man, and particularly the American variety, thinks of work as his central activity. It should be no surprise, therefore, that Americans, suddenly discovering that they are creating abundant leisure as a by-product of their efficiency at work, are leaping to the conclusion that this new free time constitutes a major social problem.

Behind the exuberant rhetoric which inflates leisure to the status of "an unprecedented social problem" lie two basic arguments. First, there is the historical. A publication of the National Education Association, *Leisure and the Schools,* is typical of the current literature in the field. It begins with the historical argument: "Perhaps the age into which the world is embarking will be recorded by historians as the 'Age of Leisure.' What conjectures this brings forth . . . ."

The first conjecture might be how anyone with a sense of history could possibly distinguish this as the "Age of Leisure." As Hannah Arendt has pointed out, the renowned decrease in working hours during the past hundred years is vastly overrated, because it is measured against the extreme conditions prevailing during the first stages of industrialism. Taking a somewhat longer view, we find that the Greeks of the classical period enjoyed leisure time much beyond our own by simply working only hard enough to earn their sustenance. (The typical Greek meal of the time, we might recall, "consisted of two courses: the first a kind of gruel, and the second a kind of gruel.") In contrast with our self-conscious debate over leisure, the Greeks, who invented it, spoke very little of leisure *qua* leisure. We cannot imagine an Athenian citizen asking Socrates how to solve his leisure problem—the question was simply how to live.

Similarly, in classical Roman and in medieval times the average man worked for hardly more than half the days of the year; the rest were pre-empted by religious or secular holidays. In short, leisure for the masses is *not* historically unprecedented in human experience. What we are now witnessing is essentially only a return to a sane and normal human division of work and leisure time. Of course, we have problems which did not afflict previous societies. The industrial revolution and the Protestant work-ethos are in our bones, and the traditional underpinnings of popular culture are eroded and discredited. But it is *these* factors which will create the problems, not the increased free time itself.

Moreover, the amount of free time available to the average American today has been considerably exaggerated. A study released last year by the Twentieth Century Fund, *Of Time, Work, and Leisure* by Sebastian de Grazia, concludes that when the official statistics are adjusted to eliminate part-time workers and to reflect travel to and from work, the extraordinary amount of moonlighting, etc., one finds that "the difference between 1850 and 1960 comes down to a few hours. . . . The great and touted gains in free time since the 1850's, then, are largely myth."

The second argument used to inflate leisure into a "problem" is sociological. Here the line is that the largest amounts of free time will accrue to unskilled and semi-skilled workers who have the least training in how to use their leisure. The hinted-at outcomes range from collective psychosis to fascist revolution. The implication is that workers need help in coping with their new leisure; naturally, each group of experts stands ready to march to the task. Typical is this statement by Willard C. Sutherland, Director of Personnel Services, for the National Recreation Association: "Since the average citizen is unable to invent new uses for his leisure, a professional elite shares a heavy responsibility for discovering new criteria for ways of employing leisure. . . ."

Social scientists who are closer to what is actually happening are much less alarmed. They find that particular groups in the population who already have a three-day week find little difficulty in making use of their free time. Eli Ginzberg at Columbia's Conservation of Human Resources Project studied a group of movie projectionists averaging twenty-eight hours of work per week. He started with the hypothesis that men who worked so little would find difficulty in keeping busy. The hypothesis was wrong. The men simply spent more time with their children, helped their wives

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around the house, spent additional hours at union headquarters.

Work and Leisure, a comprehensive survey of studies in this field done by Nels Anderson, published by The Free Press, concludes that increasing free time does not constitute a problem for most people. Anderson's chief point is that the two categories of work and free time are insufficient to describe how men now spend their time. It seems that many people have been telling the sociologists that they spend less time at work and yet have *less* free time. The more socially-integrated the individual is, the less his central concern appears to be with gaining more free time. Rather, his satisfactions arise out of certain non-work obligations to family, community, voluntary organizations, etc. These obligations have some of the rigidities of work but yield many of the satisfactions of leisure. In short, a kind of traditionally American diligence in personal development and community citizenship seems to be absorbing much of the increasing time away from work. The "problem" of leisure is being solved in these cases not by direct attack, but by the development of compelling interests which naturally fill the person's free time.

JUST AS significant as the distortion of historical and sociological facts that lies behind the literature on the "problem" of leisure, is the distorted *ideal* of leisure which these writers hold. They base their ideal on a definition of leisure as merely spare time—time which no longer must be devoted to work. While warning us that we must free ourselves of our Puritan attitude toward the comparative values of work and leisure, these writers succumb to it themselves by defining leisure negatively as simply the time not spent working.

But spare time filled with recreation and play is far from the conception of leisure dominant in the Western humanistic tradition. In that tradition leisure is not merely a kind of time ("leisure time"), but a specific form of human activity. An *otium sine dignitate* ("Leisure without dignity") has been considered mere animalism. Play, relaxation, and sleep have seemed similar in being a preparation for resuming work, but *leisure* has seemed to be something better than work, and *its* end. A leisure civilization, in this view, is not one in which men have increasing amounts of time away from their jobs. It is one with the task of exploring and extending a cultural heritage.

This ideal of true leisure, stemming from the Western tradition, is slighted by those who would "solve" the "problem" of leisure for us. To reduce vast aspects of the human condition to the dimensions of mere social problems can in fact be a way of evading rather than confronting our responsibilities. For "problems" are not solved by courage, imagination, or wise choices. They are solved by technique. To identify leisure as simply "a problem" is to invite the experts and technicians to take over.

What is being criticized here is not the assumption that the average man's life will be profoundly altered by the changes now occuring in the world of work and leisure. What is being questioned is a particular response to this assumption. The formulation of a simple "problem" of leisure, posed as an exercise in social techniques, is both an insufficient and a dangerous approach to meeting the real challenges of technological change. Rather than tackling leisure so directly, we would do better to get to work earnestly on our social problems which are already acute, and about which we really know what to do, at the same time maintaining an awareness of the long-range implications of our actions.

Moreover, emphasis on such pseudo-problems as leisure distracts us from the real problems which demand immediate action. While we busy ourselves about the potential problem of leisure which automation may someday create, we lag in working on actual problems of the current state of automation, e.g., unemployment. A preoccupation with leisure also takes attention away from the question of the quality of work which is available in America today.

The case of David Riesman is a dramatic illustration of the real difference which the mistaken notion that leisure is a problem can make in our approach to social reform. In *The Lonely Crowd,* Riesman used the leisure sop to explain away current problems in the world of work. He admitted that white-collar and factory workers show increasing signs of despair and frustration at their meaningless and degrading mechanical jobs. But automation is coming, he consoled himself, and these workers will find their satisfactions in their leisure hours. Let's give up on work, he concluded, and devote ourselves to upgrading leisure. Thus the real problems of work were argued away by appealing to the pseudo-problems of leisure.

Significantly, Riesman has recently changed his position on this issue. He feels now that "a rich, heavily automatized society is precisely one that can afford to reorganize work so that attention is focused no longer exclusively on the product, but on the worker himself as a product of his work."

SEEN IN its broadest aspect, the challenge of leisure regains its classical scope and transcending importance. As Max Kaplan pointed out in his definitive *Leisure in America* (1960), leisure is a topic which deals essentially with the nature of the Good Life. "Leisure in America is not, *ipso facto,* a problem or a blessing," Kaplan concludes. And he adds: "The phrase *good leisure* cannot make sense without a prior conception of the *good life.*"

The use of leisure is, therefore, a perennial question for free human beings. To define it as a "social problem"

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is like treating love as a social disease. The "problem" of leisure conjured up by the public scolders and zealous editorializers is both much smaller and much larger than their forebodings suggest. On the one hand, our new leisure is neither historically unique nor sociologically calamitous. The portrayal of it as such misrepresents history, misinterprets our current situation, and distorts the basic nature of true leisure. The spate of recent articles and books purporting to discover this problem and proposing technical solutions through specific social agencies are based on a false conception of the personal and philosophic questions which leisure presents. There is no need for the experts to rush in with their courses in creative leisure and their planned activities. They prejudice the search for viable courses of action, and they distract our attention from the genuine problems which face us.

On the other hand, leisure, as always, presents us with some of the deepest problems of what man should make of himself. These true problems of leisure are too large to be amenable to technical solution. In our work, Freud suggested, we seek and express our bondage to society. In our leisure, we might add, we seek and express our bondage to ourselves. Relieved of the compulsion to engage in a particular kind of productive activity, we are embarrassingly free to find our own level of self-determined activity. Society may legitimately provide opportunities and protections appropriate to the fruitful use of leisure, but it cannot attack the whole concept as one grand excercise in social engineering. Techniques and expertise are insufficient.

The use which men make of their free hours will not, finally, be determined by what official agencies offer or do not offer. It will depend instead on personal character and the quality of our society as a whole. Leisure can be approached as a problem, then, only in the largest sense: as a political problem, a philosophical problem, a problem of values.

A Premature Presentation

Capote Collected

DAVID LITTLEJOHN

AT THIRTY-EIGHT—late middle age, at least, for a *wunderkind*—Truman Capote has been Collected, or at least Selected (by himself) in a snug, sturdy, four hundred sixty-page golden duodecimo volume (*Selected Writings of Truman Capote,* Random House. $5.95). If so classicizing, so dignified a retrospective exhibition seems a bit premature—Capote's Great Work, we are told, is to be his next one—this collection at least provides us with the opportunity to find out why. Capote, in my judgment, is simply not important enough a writer to warrant such a display; at least not yet. But he is an interesting, talented writer, and as a literary phenomenon, if nothing else, perhaps worthy even at this oddly early date of the review that he and his publishers have asked us to make.

The author's selection of evidence for his trial is, at least in one respect, a bit bizarre. Almost half of this little book is taken up with samples, not of his fiction, but of his journalism; and over half of that by *The Muses Are Heard,* his sharp, sprightly, and eminently forgettable account of the *Porgy and Bess* company's visit to Leningrad in 1955-56. Such things (there is also a forty-page interview with Marlon Brando in the actor's Japanese hotel room) made brisk barbershop reading in their day, tucked away in those endless columns between *New Yorker* advertisements. But there seems something a little perverse in the attempt to inflate such ephemeral and impressionistic reportage, however neatly written, into "literature," into the prestigious permanence of *Selected Writings.*

If none of his journalism, even the best, meets the criterion that makes buying a book worthwhile—that one wants to read it "again"—much of the fiction does. Setting aside for the moment the question of a justification for the collection itself, the selection Capote has made is reasonable enough. The most surprising omission, *Other Voices, Other Rooms*—Capote's first book and still his finest—is explained, perhaps, by a comment of the author's quoted in Mark Schorer's introduction: "I am a stranger to that book; the person who wrote it seems to have so little in common with my present self. Our mentalities, our interior temperatures are entirely different." If his present "interior temperature" is represented by *The Muses Are Heard,* the Brando piece, and the 1960 "Among the Paths to Eden" which *are*

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included, one can only lament the cooling off that has taken place.

Still, if he has disowned *Other Voices,* Capote had the discretion to omit as well *The Grass Harp,* his second "full-length" reminiscence of a Southern boyhood. The first work, while "minor" and often troublesome, can still be poignant and honestly evocative. Joel and Idabel are real and remarkable children in an otherworldly setting, and the attention they drew to their twenty-three-year-old creator was assuredly just. But *The Grass Harp,* at once overly sentimental and overly pretentious, was an uncomfortable sequel, a latter-day *Tom Sawyer* bowed under an unconscionable weight of muddy "philosophy."

FOR THIS COLLECTION, Capote restricted himself to most of the short stories from *A Tree of Night* and *Breakfast at Tiffany's* and a single story published since. All his best shorter things are here: the early Gothic tales, the middle "sentimental" pieces, and the otherwise unclassifiable title story from the latter collection, which one must try, in all justice, to dissociate from Audrey Hepburn. Preferring an author's earliest works can become a disease (and must seriously annoy the author), but none of Capote's later stories, in my estimation—with one exception—approaches the power and importance of the psychological ghost stories of the 1940's. If success has cured him of whatever depressing introspection gave rise to these eerie imaginings, he was better off—artistically—sick.

"Miriam," the story of the sleek little witch-girl incarnated by the dreams of a lonely old woman, is probably Capote's only perfect, unfailingly effective work. But there are pieces of the others—most of "A Tree of Night," pages here and there in "Shut a Final Door," everything but the central plot of "Master Misery"—in which Capote has caught the same trapped and terrifying sense of aloneness, ghost-ridden and obsessed. There are, obviously, things one would rather read about than the forgotten, bisexual people who go home each night to lonely New York rooms; but if such stories must be written, it is good to have them done so well. And with his deft interweaving of thoroughly credible supernatural horrors, Capote has made of these nasty little nightmares something more; he has made them everyone's.

Unfortunately, when the author outgrew these early stories of tormented aloneness, he often leapt all the way to a *gemütlich* excess of childish sentimentality. In this too-happy tree-house world of middle-period Capote, we are always innocent children (up to age sixty), embattled in joyous togetherness against the mean and dreamless monsters of Grown-Up Land, the Aunt Pollys of a later day. Once, unexplainably, this formula worked. Capote's "A Christmas Memory," the exception I noted above, is the nearest thing America has to "A Christmas Carol." Like Dickens' story, it is sentimental and "moral," but deservedly, winningly so: no one would have it different. Like it too, "A Christmas Memory" is, or ought to be, a classic. It deserves its own Lionel Barrymore, preferably a young, Southern Lionel Barrymore, to read it aloud on the radio once a year at Christmas. "Children on Their Birthdays," whose title betrays it as another middle-period piece (chronologically, these periods overlap), is, on the other hand, a bit too weird, too confused to succeed: there is a troubling touch of Miriam in the ageless Miss Bobbit. She deserves, nonetheless, her place in Capote's wonderful gallery of beguiling female outlaws, with Idabel Thompkins and Holly Golightly.

I may never know quite what to make of "Breakfast at Tiffany's," in great part because the shadow of *The Great Gatsby* looms so hugely behind it. One has the disturbing feeling that all this has been done before, and so much better. A witty, not-too-worldly narrator, half-detached and half-involved, recalls with ironic nostalgia his prolonged, intermittent, half-hypnotized observations of the hero—the hero a near-mystic figure of lawless romance and unutterable sophistication, who turns out, in the end, to be a fraud, a nobody, a hick from the heart-of-America sticks: a Lulamae Barnes from Tulip, Texas, a James Gatz from North Dakota. The parallels become uncanny: the parties at Gatsby's and the parties at Holly's, romanticized bootleggers and a hyper-romanticized Mafia, Meyer Wolfsheim and Rusty Trawler, Daisy and the Green Light—José and Buenos Aires; the narrator calls up the hero's great friends after his fall, and finds out they are friends no more. Even Capote's wonderful title is pure Scott Fitzgerald.

To push this too far—perhaps even this far—is unfair to Capote. Whatever shadows it evokes, the story is still his, and one of the brightest and liveliest things in the present collection. "Breakfast at Tiffany's" joins the technical finesse of the early stories to the sentimental romance of the middle ones, and at times so adroitly that one overlooks what it is we are romanticizing. It is certainly, richly worth re-reading; but a second reading, I would suggest, might be more careful, more discriminating than the first.

Mark Schorer predicts in his introduction that Capote's next book—a meticulously factual account of a small-town Kansas murder case, entitled *In Cold Blood*—"will be the most remarkable change of all, and the most exciting"; and one is eager to witness the change. With the *Selected Writings* (which, for all its good things, still strikes me as presumptuously premature), his publishers have set it a springboard. Capote evidently regards one stage of his career as ended, and this collection, at least the fictional half of it, is its small, fine monument. Stage Two will begin, soon one hopes, with *In Cold Blood.*

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Frost, Cummings and Williams

Legacy of Three Poets

JOSEPHINE JACOBSEN

WHEN THE EXHIBIT "The Image of Man" toured the museums of the country two years ago, sooner or later, in each city, there was a note of dismay, if not of protest: is *this* how the artist sees man, sees life in his own day? Often tragic and horrifying, always sobering, this show was in fact one more sign that the vast majority of twentieth-century artists—whether painters, novelists, sculptors, playwrights or poets—have found the face of contemporary life a medusa-visage. The point needs no laboring. Anyone through whose hands any part of the torrent of poetry pours, knows that most of the best of it deals with frustration, helpless pain, betrayed integrity and a desolate and piercing sense of dislocation.

In the past twelve months three prominent American poets died: Robert Frost, E. E. Cummings and William Carlos Williams. All were old—between seventy and ninety—and in our general conception, old age is a period alien, if not fatal, to poetry. The Shelley-Keats image, the youthful figure of the runner fame never outran, lingers, and Yeats—that poet who flowered most fully when he was so close to death—was aware, in *Sailing to Byzantium*, of the conventionality of "cooling poet and burning poem."

Whether there is that in contemporary living which is auspicious for the poetry of maturity might be worth wondering about. It is possible that a poetry of which the core is endurance had to be written by men who had passed the age which finds endurance impossible or ignoble. In any event, the three poets who died in the past year continued in their later lives to deepen and extend their own work, and this work gives to the reader who asks himself in what its core consists, the opportunity to examine poetry which reached its highest level when the men who produced it were able to speak from great reserves of experience.

In considering these American poets, more than midway through the twentieth century and in relation to the atmosphere they breathed in their country and their age, one fact emerges: these three were profoundly different one from another in background, in temperament, in technique. But in a curious way they are alike. They are alike in that their verdict, the quintessence of the vision of life which their work represents, differs from the general tone of the artist today. None of the three ever overlooks, denies or minimizes, the poison or pitfall. None of them has an iota of easy optimism, and none of them covers any grim shape with a coat of gilt. Whatever sense of ultimate order, meaning or hope their work posits, rises like a spring from below the roots of factual knowledge. It never comes, superficially, from above these roots. For each of the three, a faith is the condition of his work.

These poets do not deny any of the imputations of those who write in a state of mind close to despair. They are no more pleased by the accomplishments of authority or the circumstances of survival than are Beckett, or Camus, or Orwell. They acknowledge the details of an image they reject, but they do more than this. They pass from these things, which they acknowledge in the very bone and structure of their work, to something living and unquenchable which absorbs all that deadly knowledge and in the end uses it to quicken a final yet tentative vision.

That vision, in each of the poets, has a serenity, a sense of life and richness which denies the facts only by translating them. This is not "significant" as a "trend." It does not argue a shift toward optimism on the part of the artist. It means simply itself, that at a moment when many people feel stranded between the Kafkaesque inferno of chaos—a chaos all the more sinister for being suspected of having immutable and mysterious laws—and the wax-works of positive thinking, three of America's most independent poets have ended by leaving at the core of their poetry a belief in a hopeful design.

One of the tragedies of modern language is that certain words captured and gutted by the enemy have remained in captivity, tottering about as hideous clichés. Poets have, reasonably enough, become convinced that words such as "love" and "beauty" now exist as embarrassing and faintly obscene travesties. It is only a step from this conviction to outlawing from honest work, not only the words, but their implications. Each of these poets has resolved that dilemma.

ROBERT FROST is a poet who has suffered spectacularly from a specious approachability. People who were unwilling to read difficult poetry, or incapable of reading it, conceived, with a sublime ignorance, that they

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were able to read Frost. Consequently, the fatuous seeker after poetically respectable clichés has often sustained an image of him as an apple-cheeked, twinkle-eyed, cracker-barrel bard, full of wholesome no-nonsense. In their efforts to destroy this lampoon, Frost's critics were driven to point out, truthfully, the profoundly somber nature of his outlook, the strain of implacable loneliness and darkness which runs through the core of his poetry. The final weight of Frost's conviction of, and acquiescence in, an order governing visible chaos, rests in large part just on this sense of loneliness and darkness.

The quintessence of Frost's vision of nature has under its measured serenity a shiver of the power of darkness which it has surmounted and controlled. Frost loves the verb "to scare." It has a misleading sound of the childish, almost of the cute. But in the context of fear, of evil, it is the doll, the child, which can be most frightening. Frost uses "scare" as the witch of Coos mislays the skeleton's knuckle-bone among the buttons in her sewing-bag. From very early poems to "The Draught Horse"—that finest poem of Frost's last collection—this sense of fear, a fear in which silence, night, the soul of darkness has invaded the physical, is omnipresent.

> They learned to rattle the lock and key
> To give whatever might chance to be
> Warning and time to be off in flight:
> And preferring the out- to the in-door night
> They learned to leave the house-door wide
> Until they had lit the lamp inside.

We do not need the later nightmare adventure of the "Draught Horse" to teach us that this is not fear of a tramp, a murderer, or of a puppet of social evil, but of a faceless ancient foe; the dry rattle of a shutter, a phone ringing in an empty room, the malevolence of a windy autumn night—something powerful and evil, interrupted. "Out on the porch's sagging floor/Leaves got up in a coil and hissed,/Blindly struck at my knee and missed." These actions, this weather, correspond to that "inner weather" of the poet, who can "scare" himself with his "own desert places."

In "The Draught Horse," the dark knife which strikes, killing the horse and leaving the protagonist and his companion to go "with a lantern that wouldn't burn/ Through a pitch-dark, limitless grove" smacks clearly of hate. And hate is indeed considered, and rejected. What is tentatively accepted is that this is not a vicious device to trap and lose the victims in limitless pitch-darkness. This is a faith in design (nothing more than design) which is neither naive, optimistic nor specific.

Frost's pleasure in "ulteriority" is nowhere more evident than in his use of the homespun accent; nothing baffles faster. A public which for seventy-five years conceived *Huckleberry Finn* as a rollicking children's book and the source of summer posters, is not likely to find the "ingredients of a witch's broth," or the details of an Ingmar Bergman forest at dusk, in a child's jingle such as "We dance around in a ring and suppose,/ But the secret sits in the middle and knows."

The sense of serenity which is ultimately found to be the basis of Frost's work does not pretend to take a new view of the materials for hope. Their aspect is hopeless; it is from the hopelessness itself that the poet gathers hope, from the nature of its secret that he gathers his fruit, rooted below the level of possibility's contradiction: "What tree may not the fig be gathered from?/The grape may not be gathered from the birch?/ It's all you know the grape, or know the birch."

THERE IS a timeless quality in Frost's work which irrationally argues that he was born mature; one watches the poetry of William Carlos Williams achieve maturity. But if E. E. Cummings ever had maturity thrust upon him, he repulsed it cleanly. In his bumpy introduction to the *Collected Poems* (which begins with what must surely be the coyest introduction to open any book, "The poems to come are for you and for me and are not for mostpeople. . . .") Cummings says, "Take the matter of being born. What does being born mean to mostpeople? Catastrophe unmitigated . . . Social revolution. The cultured aristocrat yanked out of his hyper-exclusive ultravoluptuous superpallazzo, and dumped into an incredibly vulgar detention camp, swarming with every conceivable species of undesirable organism." And this attitude of hostile derision toward the denigration of life never alters in the long, uneven history of Cummings' work. The derision is uneven, too. Much of it springs from Cummings' deliberately willed immaturity, from his determination to ignore things he does not wish to acknowledge.

Time has been ruthless to much of his bitterness and most of his vituperation. Even the figures in good poems have had the ground snatched from under them. Olaf and Miss Gay only survive at all because of an archetypal truth which sustains them, regardless of factual circumstances surrounding female college students and conscientious objectors. But the obverse of the derision toward life-haters was Cummings' own completely spontaneous and indestructible confidence in the value of being alive.

To Cummings' eyes, knaves and fools surround him. He is persecuted by systems, pressures, rigidities. But all his protests, valid and puerile alike, are secondary to his true impetus. He is, at bottom, only interested in these things as obstacles. Never do they constitute for him, as for many a heartsick artist, all that seems left in a shrunken life. Through the embarrassing misses, the clear jazzy hits, the jejeune absurdities, runs the flood of true passion. It may express itself in Cole-Porter-wisdom: "there is a lady whose name is afterwards./ she is sitting beside young death, is slender/likes flowers." It is present in the feel of things ostensibly joyless:

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"Satanic and blasé/a black goat lookingly wanders," or "the queer monkey, with a little oldish doll-like face and hairy arms like an ogre and rubbercolored hands and feet filled with quick fingers and a remarkable tail which is allbyitselfalive." It is overt in every "brittle marvelous breathing thing."

"Rain is no respecter of persons/the snow doesn't give a soft white/damn Whom it touches." But below this there is a level of far greater intensity. As Frost is conscious of a hostile intent somewhere, which is resolved in the consciousness of design, so Cummings feels, directly, a presence of benignancy—"deeply completely conscious of the rain or rather/Somebody who uses roofs and streets skillfully to make a possible beautiful sound."

In proportion as he succeeds as a lyric poet, it is happily difficult to pin Cummings down; and at his absolute best he is, magnificently, a lyric poet. The joy, the sense of receiving without ever possessing, which is his great characteristic, is conveyed in a cadence, a tone or a vowel, or by the hesitations within a line. And it is in this way, far more than in what he specifies, that Cummings functions in his role as believing man. Yet he is specific, in his manner:

(make
strangely) known (establish
new) come, what
Being! open us open
our
selves, create
(suddenly announce: hurl
blind full steep love)

Cummings' last, and even his best, poems are still freely mingled with the old embarrassing spit-in-your-eye cuteness, self-righteous clamor, and look-ma-no-hands maneuvers. But conversely, beginning very early and with total consistency, there is one quality which runs through everything; and it does steady and fortify itself.

There can seldom have been a poet who devoted more of his time reviling systems, people, methods of thought and groups. It is possible to discover under the wildly assorted objects of his wrath, a common principle: death-in-life. It is deadness and its corruption of life, its injury to life, against which Cummings launched both his spitballs and his thunderbolts. Religiosity, conformity, nationalism, the police-mind, the possessive, are by him all lumped into one characteristic. They are hostile to life, to the principle of growth, of spring, of creation. They are important to him not of themselves, but because of their obdurate weight thrown against life's motion. "Miracles are to come. With you I leave a remembrance of miracles; they are by somebody who can love and who shall be continuously reborn, a human being; somebody who said to those near him when his fingers would not hold a brush, 'tie it into my hand'."

BESIDES the perfecting of a form and approach more flexible than Frost's, more sustained than Cummings', the poetry of William Carlos Williams fuses two forces often viewed as hostile: the leap of joy and the sense of moral structure. In common with Frost and Cummings, Williams as a poet is never one of the self-deprecators—the poets who have a final shattering sense of their own unimportance, of their own voices as faintly ludicrous, piping in the general chaos. He makes for the role of poet large and ancient claims:

I have eyes
that are made to see and if
they see ruin for myself
and all that I hold
dear, they see
also
through the eyes
and through the lips
and tongue the power
to free myself and speak of it.

It is possible that no other American poet—and Williams was profoundly and almost ostentatiously American—has so delicately balanced the point of chaos and its domination. His postulated victory is made from a thousand failures, blunders, absurdities and cruelties. His ultimate conviction of the nature of commitment, and of its relation to love and to joy, is reached by receiving and dominating all assaults.

Karl Shapiro once asked: "What has become of the love poem?" Answer: William Carlos Williams has written it. "Asphodel That Greeny Flower" is a love poem as fine as any written in English in the last fifty years. From it Williams' form emerges, complex in simplicity, strong and delicately balanced. And from it too emerge the shapes of continuity and love, of continuity in love, the odor of the asphodel:

It is a curious odor,
a moral odor,
that brings me
near to you.

The poem is alive with discovery. Williams refuses formulas—he has spoken hotly of the poets who are "pimps of tradition." Nor can he be accused of ingenuousness in his warmth or in his faith in commitment. In whatever sense *Paterson* may fail, certainly it does not fail from lack of the sense of reality. As poet, as physician, Williams is an unbemused observer:

Faces all knotted up like burls on oaks
Grasping, fox-snouted, thick-lipped,
Sagging breasts and protruding stomachs,
Rasping voices, filthy habits with the hands.

What Williams did in life, and what he did not do, have enormously influenced the poems. The physician is implicit in the peculiarly trained lucidity with which he observes physical, emotional and mental states, and it is this in turn which makes so impressive his sense of

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a whole which is more than the sum of physique, nervous system and emotions. What he did not do, was affiliate himself with literary cliques, fronts, competitiveness, academic rivalries. He is the least inky of poets.

It is interesting that while (due as much to the necessities of their profession as to their own taste) a heavy plurality of all poets today are associated with some academic institution, Williams, Frost and Cummings are all exceptions to this rule. Each was by temperament unsuited to academic life, and each was notably "unliterary" in his flavor. Though in each the fruit was quite different, the roots were all strongly in the idiom of daily speech, and each ran counter to certain poetic assumptions common to the hour in which his poetry began to assume its distinctive form.

As his final poems perfect the order toward which his work had been struggling—the strong, accurate, characteristic shape which was imposed by Williams on the turbulent mass of his material—so they speak of another order, an order which imposed itself on the chaos of phenomena:

I have learned much in my life
from books
and out of them
about love.
Death
it is not the end of it.

Concern for Immortality

Updike's Quest for Liturgy

MICHAEL NOVAK

THOUGH HE is barely thirty, John Updike has already awakened themes dormant in American letters since Hawthorne and Melville. Surely many religious people feel their own childhood, their hopes and terrors, to the tips of their toes when they read him. Yet the established critics seem to miss what he is saying.

"The point to be made about John Updike," George Steiner wrote about *The Centaur,* "is tiresomely obvious. . . . It is, of course, the gap between formal, technical virtuosity and the interest or originality of what is being said." Yet Updike is often writing about man's search for personal immortality. He sometimes takes Protestant Christianity with ruthless seriousness. He is willing to try to understand life in American small towns and suburbs as it is now lived; he is not a prophet of dangerous living, nor a preacher of meaninglessness. He regularly refuses the values, the starting-points, of the secular reformer. He does not take the lead in the causes the critics like to support; he sometimes takes a direction they fail to see.

To illustrate these points, I would like to invite close attention to the four-part story with which Updike closes *Pigeon Feathers*: "Packed Dirt, Churchgoing, A Dying Cat, A Traded Car." This story, I believe, is central to his work, and touches on nearly all his themes. It is also one of the most perfectly worked pieces of prose in the English language, perhaps even overworked, too elaborate. Through its four sections, the story ascends in a complex spiral. Updike begins with images of a path being destroyed by machines, and reflects on the interaction of men, machines, and nature; he next finds images for a contemplative view of the world; he confronts death; and last of all he confronts evil and finds an image for immortality. He seems to be struggling to find images, like Salinger in a more precious way, for that deep, serene, perennial way of looking at life which the secular, active West has lost.

"We in America need ceremonies, is I suppose, sailor, the point of what I have written"; so Updike concludes the present montage. *Why* do we in America need ceremonies? This is what Updike must show us. The first reason he suggests is that ceremonies are necessary, because through them we become human. But the second reason thrusts more sharply home: it is so that we will be able even to *conceive* what immortality is like, and therefore what we are like.

"PACKED DIRT" concludes a cycle of stories. The title story, "Pigeon Feathers," catches the same hero, David Kern, in his more religious, small-town youth. Young David asks the minister at Sunday School (an experience like that of Philip Roth in "The Conversion of the Jews") "Where will Heaven be?" The minister replied in a forgiving tone: "David, you might think of Heaven this way: as the way the good that Abraham Lincoln did lives after him."

David is appalled. *That* means nothing. He is dis-

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gusted at this betrayal of Christianity, this ignorance compounded with a lie. His pseudo-religious mother tries to comfort him, and ensnares herself in worse ignorance, worse lies, worse sentiment.

" 'Mother, good grief. Don't you see'—he rasped away the roughness in his throat—'if when we die there's nothing, all your sun and fields and what not are all, ah, *horror*? It's just an ocean of horror.' " Young David "needed to begin to build his fortress against death. They none of them believed. He was alone. . . . All those sexy, perfumed people, wisecracking, chewing gum, all of them doomed to die, and none of them noticing," he alone recognizing that "we cannot, *cannot*, submit to death."

Now since Freud at least, it would be fashionable to think that something must be wrong with David: after all, people *don't* live forever and there's no need even for them to want to (his religious mother thinks he's greedy). But the young David Kern concludes his contemplation of the pigeons he has shot "robed in this certainty: that the God who had lavished such craft upon these worthless birds would not destroy His whole creation by refusing to let David live forever."

"Packed Dirt" opens with David Kern admitting that he is always "reassured, nostalgically pleased, even, as a member of my animal species made proud" by the sight of bare earth made firm by the passage of human feet. He is reassured, and that is the passive fruit of ceremony. He is made proud, for ceremony is an active victory won by his animal species.

Patches of packed dirt abound "in small towns"—not so much in cities. They are "unconsciously humanized intervals of clay," made by the quiet interaction of men with the earth. They remind him of his childhood, "when one communes with dirt down among the legs, as it were, of abiding fatherly presences. The earth is our playmate then, and the call to supper has a piercingly sweet eschatological ring." To become as a little child is to treat the earth as a playmate, unself-consciously commune with things, be aware of a fatherly presence, know that the piercingly sweet call of death bids one home.

But machines enter the neighborhood to make way for cars, making "our rooms shake with the curses of their labor." The littlest Kern, not yet two, is frightened by the gnawing, mashing machines. By the next morning, however, the children—children, mostly, make paths—had treaded a path up the cliff left by the machines. This "modest work of human erosion" is one of those things which make Kern proud. It is a ceremony which seems precious to him, "not only because it recalled" his own childhood, but above all because "it had been achieved accidentally, and had about it that repose of grace that is beyond willing."

The children are at home with nature, but we "in America have from the beginning been cleaving and baring the earth, attacking, reforming the enormity of nature we were given, which we took to be hostile." The theme of American history has been: Conquer this continent; exalt man over nature. But now Updike estimates our triumph: "We have explored, on behalf of all mankind, this paradox: the more matter is outwardly mastered, the more it overwhelms us in our hearts." The scientific attitude is not the attitude of men, but of artisans. For men the world is not so much an enemy as a playmate, and if the war is "incapable of ceasing," it is, at least, "good to know that now there are enough of us to exert a counter-force"—enough to favor man over artisan.

"CHURCHGOING" begins just where "Packed Dirt" leaves off: it takes churchgoing "purely as a human recreation." From the human point of view alone, whether one chooses "to listen, or not listen, as a poorly paid but resplendently robed man strives to console us with scraps of ancient epistles and halting accounts, hopelessly compromised by words," churchgoing gives us a chance to be ourselves, to observe, to think. It is "the most available democratic experience," where, as at the polls, we are "actually given our supposed value, the soul-unit of one, with its noumenal arithmetic of equality: one equals one equals one." Sitting and standing in unison, we "sing and recite creeds and petitions that are like paths worn smooth in the raw terrain of our hearts." But even to describe churchgoing, Kern admits, is to corrupt it: it sounds much too preachy and self-conscious.

As a child, David Kern felt "nothing in church but boredom and an oppressive futility." Only at fifteen, did he feel "a pleasant emotion in church," when on raw March nights during Lent he went in the family Chevrolet to usher with his father, while "the wind howled a nihilistic counterpoint beyond the black windows," and the "minority flock furtively gathered within the hostile enormity of a dying, sobbing empire." His restless father thought of church "as something he helped run," anxious for the moment to pass the plate. Young David felt like an initiate, smug, condescending, as he gallantly lowered the felt plate towards each pew of "The Others," and began to know the dangers of even the lowly honor of being usher.

He recalls, from later in his life, the "Second Century quality" of churches in the Village: "In Manhattan, Christianity is so feeble its future seems before it. . . . The expectantly hushed shelter of the church is like a spot worn bare by a softball game. . . . The presence of the city beats like wind at the glowing windows." He hurries home afterwards "to assume the disguise" of a non-churchgoer. He alternates churches, so as not to become among the known, who can look condescendingly on "The Others." "We are the others. It is of the essence to be a stranger in church." For though community is

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crucial, so likewise is personality uncluttered and naked in the sight of God.

On an island in the Caribbean, Kern attends a church in which he stands white among the dark natives. "For windows the church possessed tall arched apertures filled not with stained glass but with air and outward vision," and outside little girls were playing on "the packed dirt around the church." Yet in this moving setting, the "service was fatiguingly long," and natives who could hardly speak English were led through "exhaustive petitionary prayers (for the Queen, the Prime Minister, Parliament) and many eight-versed hymns sung with a penetrating, lingering joy. . . . Musical stress, the British accent, and Negro elision worked upon the words a triple harmony of distortion."

The church ceremony seems such a betrayal: Kern loses his place in the hymn—"without a visual key I was lost"—and, bored, turns from the restless deacons slipping in and out of the windows, towards "the earth's wide circle round." "The Caribbean seemed a steeply tilted blue plane to which the few fishing boats in the bay below had been attached like magnetized toys." The churches do not seem to understand symbol and ceremony any longer. They are as technological and dry as the cities of cement. They do not relate us to the earth. Updike concludes this section, too, with a philosopher: "God made the world, Aquinas says, in play." The Caribbean speaks with more eloquence than the church.

THE THIRD section, "A Dying Cat," begins with a brief meditation on the ambiguity of matter, but twists the spiral of the story upwards from inanimate nature to the question of life and death: "Matter has its radiance and its darkness; it lifts and it buries. Things compete; a life demands a life."

From an island in the Caribbean, the scene shifts to "another English island," England itself, where on a lonely road late at night David Kern encounters something frightening which he does not then understand. America is somehow stifling for the religious man; we "receive our supernatural mail on foreign soil," and on the present incident the "signature" is "decisive but illegible."

For six years Kern was unable to talk to his wife about it. Yet in itself the incident could have been innocuous: while his wife lies "swathed in white, ready for nothing so much as a graduation ceremony" in anticipation of childbirth, Kern comes upon a dying cat. It seemed to be, in the shadows, "about the size of a baby"; and of course it is as the cat dies that, that night, his perfect daughter is born.

Kern is determined not to let the cat die without ceremony. He laid her—he "felt it was female"—behind the hedge, and went back to his car to write a note to leave with her. Palm and three of the fingers of his glove are dyed a sacramental "wine-brown." The cat suffered his return stiffly: "It suggested I was making too much fuss, and seemed to say to me, *Run on home.*" He went back home, read from Chesterton's *The Everlasting Man*, prayed for his wife, and finally fell asleep.

The fourth and last section, "A Traded Car," is too long to follow in detail; as in the earlier parts, nearly every prominent word and surely every incident sends echoes forward and backward through the story. It opens: "When we returned from England, we bought a car." Before the paragraph is out, we are led to see that the car, if anything in America, is going to have to bear the symbolism that might help us understand ourselves. "Not only sand and candy wrappers accumulate in a car's interior, but heroisms and instants of communion. We in America make love in our cars, and listen to ball games, and plot our wooing of the dollar: small wonder the landscape is sacrificed to these dreaming vehicles of our ideal and onrushing manhood."

The ugly bulldozers push aside our paths to make room for highways; losing the symbols of nature, we gain the car. Kern and his wife treat their new '55 Ford as if it were a "broad blue baby," and it is not until their baby daughter born in England is nearly six that Kern can bring himself to trade it in. However, before relinquishing it to Detroit (who will "devour her child"), Kern has a last crucial adventure in the Ford.

At a dance with a woman not his wife, Kern falls sickeningly in love. The sweet desire leads to no more than her stroking his erect thumbs, but Kern's Sunday school conscience tells him that "to lust after a woman in thought is the same as committing adultery."

Unable to distinguish between automatic attraction and interior consent, Kern lies awake that night in terror. "To feel a sin was to commit it; to touch the brink was to be on the bottom of the chasm." But the real terror was that the "universe that so easily permitted me to commit adultery became . . . a universe that would easily permit me to die. The enormities of cosmic space, the maddening distension of time, history's forgotten slaughters, the child smothered in the dumped icebox, the recent breakdown of the molecular life-spiral, the proven physiological roots of the mind, the presence in our midst of idiots, Eichmanns, animals, and bacteria—all this evidence piled on, and I seemed already eternally forgotten . . . I prayed . . . prayed, prayed for a sign, any glimmer at all. . . . Each second my agony went unanswered justified it more certainly: the God who permitted me this fear was unworthy of existence."

INTENSELY MOVED, Kern awakens his wife to tell her he is frightened; pragmatically, a little bored, she gives him the Stoic answer; he falls asleep as on the night of that other encounter with death. A phone call the next day tells him his father is dying. "Instantly I was relieved. The weight on me rolled away. All day

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death had been advancing under cover and now it had struck, declared its position."

A visit to church that night, and next day he begins his drive to Pennsylvania: "*Run on home.*" He picks up a hitchhiking sailor, one of those "docile Titans—guileless, competent, mildly earnest—that we have fattened, an ocean removed from the slimming Latin passions and Nordic anxieties of Europe."

The writer, Kern, and the nameless sailor have little to talk about; yet their relationship is not at all that of brilliant isolated artist and the beauiful blond beast that Thomas Mann describes in the stories of the *Death in Venice* cycle. Updike is not after the Platonic distinction in types of men, the elite and the herd; he is after the incomprehension, the shallowness, the easy adjustment, the lack of life in our scientized environment, our "abundance of milk and honey, vitamins and protein." It sometimes seems that natural wealth, science, and pragmatic adjustment are enough; and in this environment, how can one hear of God or immortality?

A little later, the sailor gone, Kern stops at a Howard Johnson's in the Mennonite country; they remind him of an earlier time, of "that Pennsylvania knowingness—of knowing, that is, that the truth is good." At home, his mother pours him a glass of wine: "Wine had a ceremonial significance in our family; we drank it seldom." His mother tells him his father has "lost his faith": "He never was much of one for faith," she adds. "He was strictly a works man."

The next day, mother and son visit the family doctor; Kern has time to reminisce about the order, delight, and hope of childhood. Knowing his own faith gone, too, he follows his mother into the hospital. Leading him, she is already exercising the responsibilities of widowhood.

In the ensuing conversation with the older Kern, David finds his father talking mostly of how he'll miss his car. Just as David begins to feel the coming separation with his father (and cannot speak of it for "There were no words, no form of words available in our tradition"), and as his mother is already weeping, a girl from the Lutheran Home Missions comes to visit, notebook in hand. Young Kern is afraid she'll be made fun of; far from it, the older Kern tells her after a warm conversation, "You're a wonderful woman to be doing what you're doing." The woman leaves "transformed into just that. As a star shines in our heaven though it has vanished from the universe, so my father continued to shed faith upon others." A cat's dying balanced a baby's birth: a law of continuity, a kind of permanence.

For the first time, David realizes that when he says "home" he means "a far place, where I had a wife and children." His father is not going to die just yet and, though it comes as a disappointment to the bedridden man, David tells him he must return home. In an instant during which his face was blank, the older Kern "was swallowing the realization that he was no longer the center of even his son's universe." As David is about to drive north, his mother reminds him of the night he was born, when his father drove north from Wheeling: "the story of his all-night ride was the first myth in which I was a character."

Driving home in the sunset, Kern enters a new myth. Pennsylvania again reminds him of repose, of "the certainty that the truth is good." "It seemed to me for this sunset hour that the world is our bride, given us to love, and the terror and joy of the marriage is that we bring to it a nature not our bride's." But if the world is not of our nature, what shall we find to symbolize for us what our nature is like?

Like Kern's nighttime fall through an empty universe, the car ride begins to seem "meaninglessly coquettish," then "maddeningly obstinate," then "frighteningly empty." A "stellar infinity of explosive sparks" is needed to drive the effortlessly moving car, and these pass into his body. He stops for coffee and "the hallucinatory comfort of human faces"; the music on the radio obliterated time; it "began to seem a miracle that the car could gather speed" from his numb foot.

Gradually, the car becomes David Kern's soul, as little by little he leaves his body. "We climbed through a space fretted by scattered brilliance and bathed in a monotonous wind. I had been driving forever; furniture, earth, churches, women, were all things I had innocently dreamed. And through those aeons my car, beginning as a mechanical spiral of molecules, evolved into something soft and organic and consciously brave. I lost, first, heart, then head, and finally any sense of my body. In the last hour of the trip I ceased to care or feel or in any real sense see, but the car, though its soul the driver had died, maintained steady forward motion, and completed the endless journey safely."

Out of flux, Updike fashions a symbol of permanence, of spirit, in which we might at last be able even to *understand* immortality. But the very car which furnishes him this symbol, that six-year-old Ford, is soon to be traded in for a new one: "when he returned the car would be new, and the old one was gone, gone, utterly dissolved back into the mineral world from which it was conjured, dismissed without a blessing, a kiss, a testament, or any ceremony of farewell."

In a pragmatic, secular America, it is almost impossible for faith to take intelligent root, and men, though having ears, cannot hear; for there are almost no correlates in our experience for what the Word of God says. Even though he is so far limiting himself to his own experience, John Updike is beginning to make religion intelligible in America, and to fashion symbols whereby it can be understood. It is not surprising if the critics see only the dazzling words, and do not grasp what they mean. "We in America need ceremonies," is, I suppose, the point of a great many of the words he has written.

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THE STAGE

Politics and Fairy Tales

ONE OF the secondary but still highly pernicious effects of the Cold War is its perversion of a whole range of phenomena and values that lie outside its direct area of concern. There was a time when international politics, when war itself for that matter, was circumscribed, waged by professionals at the scene and existing on the margins of everyone else's consciousness. Today almost everything is politicized, everything is susceptible of being brought to the front and fired off, like a shotgun filled with miscellaneous hard objects aimed at the broadest and most undifferentiated target. Inevitably, culture has become most susceptible of all to being used as international buckshot.

A contemporary Russian play has opened here and, like a row of Pavlovian dogs when the bell rings, the reviewers have unanimously acclaimed it or derided it as a political phenomenon and have failed to see it as anything else. Mostly they have acclaimed it for being an expression of a hunger for freedom within the Soviet Union and a sly comment upon the manner in which freedom is denied in the Communist state. The lift to our own spirits is obvious.

Well, "The Dragon" by Eugene Schwartz is, in the first place, built upon a very singular notion of freedom, in the second place is almost entirely useless as a weapon in the Cold War and, finally, is charming and pleasant to see precisely in so far as it is *not* political and makes no effective contemporary comment whatsoever. Oh, there is a surface of such comment—Pavlov's dogs didn't imagine the bell, after all—but the political intention is what fails while what survives is a simple, rather perennial delight in magic, fairy procedures and the rich chromatics of dreams.

The play is itself a fairy tale, one which, as I have said, has a surface of allegorical comment. A nameless village has been subject for hundreds of years to a dragon, who claims a virgin as sacrifice each year and keeps the inhabitants in a condition of servile terror. What is unusual, and contemporary, about him is that he is a tripartite monster: besides his conventional dragon persona he also appears from time to time as a gentle but cynical old sage and as a blustering, cruel commissar type.

A young man named, simply enough, Sir Lancelot, arrives at the village, falls in love with the girl who has been chosen as the next sacrifice, learns the shameful truth about the village's enslavement and challenges the dragon to combat. Helped by some villagers who provide him with magical weapons, he defeats the dragon, cutting off each of its heads, but appears to succumb to the wounds the monster has inflicted upon him in the fight. With the dragon slain, the town's burgomaster, previously a fawning lackey, seizes power, promulgates the legend that he, not Lancelot, is the deliverer and institutes a new tyranny. But Lancelot has not died; he returns to set the village free again and to open an era of liberty and hope.

Such at least is the skin of the story. But in all of this there is a curious idea of freedom. In the future, Lancelot harangues the people, everyone must work, and it is quite clear that he means business—you can almost hear the prison gates clanking shut behind the lazy, the incompetent and the "unassimilated." Moreover, the governor's palace is going to be converted into a "house of facts" and indeed life as Lancelot sketches it promises to be if anything a damn sight less interesting and colorful than in the earlier age of tyranny.

The point is that "The Dragon" can offer only an unconscious idea or image of freedom, that which is inherent in the fairy story as such. But in its explicit allegorizing it fails to present us with any notion of freedom *from* politics, from the oppression of a politicized world; it moves, as a document of protest and exhortation, entirely within such a world, only attempting to palliate the more egregious defects and malaises but never once questioning the stifling hegemony of the political over men's lives.

So be it. Do not go to see "The Dragon" for its wisdom or its refreshing breath of air from a "new" Russia. (How contorted the responses of the reviewers have been in this regard may be seen from their near-universal identification of the dragon as Stalin and the burgomaster at Khrushchev; that the play appeared in 1943 doesn't seem to trouble them a bit. But in any case who then is Lancelot—Yevgeni Yevtushenko.) Do go to see it for its infectious charm, its high physical spirits, its gaiety and visual blessings.

For Joseph Anthony has wisely directed the play for its fairy-tale qualities far more than for its political possibilities, and Norris Houghton and Patricia Zipprodt have provided it with settings and costumes, including an absolutely magnificent three-headed dragon, that are among the most elegant and winning in many a season. The performances, too, are in general a number of notches above the off-Broadway standard; among those I enjoyed most were C. K. Alexander's as the burgomaster, Dolph Sweet's as the dragon, Ed Bordo's and Bob MacDonald's as a pair of weavers, Leslie Barrett's as a cat and, most especially, Josip Elic's as a donkey, the latter being a really inspired bit of clowning.

Whatever "The Dragon" might have meant or means now to Russians—it was banned after its initial performances twenty years ago in Leningrad and has recently been permitted to be staged again—it can only mean to us a highly enjoyable evening of theater, of a naive, vivacious and fundamentally unpolitical kind. *(At the Phoenix.)*

RICHARD GILMAN

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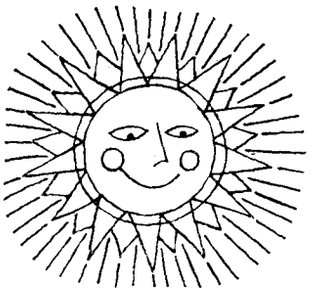

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THE SCREEN

How To Travel Without Moving

EVEN WHEN foreign films are not at their best, they succeed in giving diversity to our screen fare and often manage to take their viewers on enlightening excursions to off-beat places. A new batch of imports, playing the rounds here now, range from the near-sublime to the near-ridiculous, but all of them provide tickets to the movie-going traveler.

Satyajit Ray, whose fine "Apu" trilogy established him as a great film maker, takes us again to the hinterlands of India in "Two Daughters." Produced and directed by Ray, who also composed the music and wrote the screenplays from two unconnected stories by Tagore, "Two Daughters" is a moving and sensitive film. Both parts are more like sketches than complete stories, but both have a warmth and sympathy for their characters that hold the viewer's interest even when the plot developments are slight.

"The Postmaster" is concerned with the friendship that is started between a young city man who takes a job in a remote village and the ten-year-old orphan girl who is his servant. She tends him well. He introduces her to reading and writing. But the young man is lonely and unhappy in this faraway place; and not till he leaves do both he and the girl realize how attached they have become to each other.

The second tale, "The Conclusion," tells of the marriage between a thoughtful law student and the playful, tomboyish girl who is *his* choice, not his mother's. This story, although more humorous than the first, also has its poignant moments, and director Ray makes the most of them without slopping over into sentiment. "Two Daughters" moves slowly, but its good black-and-white photography shows us India as it is—and it makes us wish that Satyajit Ray had made in his simple, truth-seeking way the brightly-colored, over-dramatic "Nine Hours to Rama."

ALSO using good black-and-white photography is Akira Kurosawa's "The Idiot," which has many effective shots of Japan, especially some gorgeous winter views. As a film, however, this Japanese version of Dostoevsky's complicated novel leaves much to be desired. At times it is fascinating, particularly in the character developments and in the good acting of Masayuki Mori, Toshiro Mifune, and Setsuko Hara. But "The Idiot," which was made by Kurosawa in 1951 and is being shown now in its complete version, which runs almost three hours, is of more interest to cinema students than to general movie goers who may find it too long, too involved, and too much a mixture of styles.

That Kurosawa is a powerful director there is no denying. His experiments in this film, nevertheless, are more literary than cinematic, and his device of using titles and written words flashed on the screen to carry on the story, is so old-fashioned that it seems to come right out of "The Birth of a Nation." Devotees of Kurosawa, Dostoevsky, movie techniques, and Japanese scenery, however, should not miss it.

THE FRENCH have sent over a pageant called "Lafayette" which has some stunning color photography by Claude Renoir and beautiful views of a costumed cast strutting in handsome palaces in eighteenth-century France. When the story moves over to this side of the Atlantic, as it must in its scenes of the American Revolution, it bogs down a bit and the pageantry becomes absurd. Michel Le Royer, in the title role, and Jack Hawkins as General Cornwallis, give interesting interpretations, but most of the cast, which includes many famous names, are only play acting in the episodes for which they were hired.

Historically, "Lafayette" gives the impression that the French won the war for the American colonies. This may give school children the wrong idea. But the French film is so badly dubbed into English that kids, and adults too, won't really know what's being said most of the time, which is just as well. The palaces, however, are really stunning.

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RETURNING to black-and-white again, the French "Time Out for Love" has many shots of off-beat Paris, fine views of this handsome city which are shown to the heroine by two people who become her guides and mentors. Jean Seberg plays the lead role in this film directed by Jean Valere. Miss Seberg's acting career is in itself a curious story. After this Iowa girl was discovered by Otto Preminger and flopped in two of his movies, "Saint Joan" and "Bonjour Tristesse," she somehow became the favorite of New Wave French directors, and started out well enough with them in "Breathless," in which she played an American girl who becomes the mistress of a ruthless French irresponsible.

The trouble with Miss Seberg as an American-French actress is mainly that she seems to be playing the same role all the time. In her next film, she was a housewife who carried on with Jean-Pierre Cassel who was "The Five Day Lover." Then in "Playtime," she was a schoolgirl who learns about sex from an older man. And now in "Time Out for Love," Miss Seberg is a Nebraska girl with braids who falls into the clutches of a decadent and sophisticated group of Parisians.

Tutored and re-made by Micheline Presle, as a beautiful, bored, superficial woman who's kept busy designing dresses for a department store when she isn't fighting with her lover, Miss Seberg looks stunning after she gets away from the braids, and it's no wonder that the French are taken in. She even succeeds in winning Micheline's lover away not only from Micheline but also from his other conquest (Françoise Prevost).

This lover (Maurice Ronet) is interested only in himself and in sexual excursions, so after the well-dressed but naive Jean serves her purpose, the playboy lover drops her—to return to the wiser, more experienced Micheline. "Time Out for Love" is actually a pretty dreary affair, and has little new to say about Parisian decadence or love-on-the-run. The American innocent-abroad was covered expertly and with finality by Katharine Hepburn in "Summertime." From then on the story has become a cliché. The only difference in this case is that we are treated to Paris views instead of Venice.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG

Before a Row of Votive Candles

The candles that before me, placidly
Fulfilling their good office, burn on—
Out of their goodness may they send a gleam
Into my thoughts, my self-exalting thoughts!
O you white witnesses
To something that's above all such rewards
That I cast up and then cast up again:
A gleam spare them,
Or else contain them as I watch you burn,
White, shining, prayerful to your votive ends.

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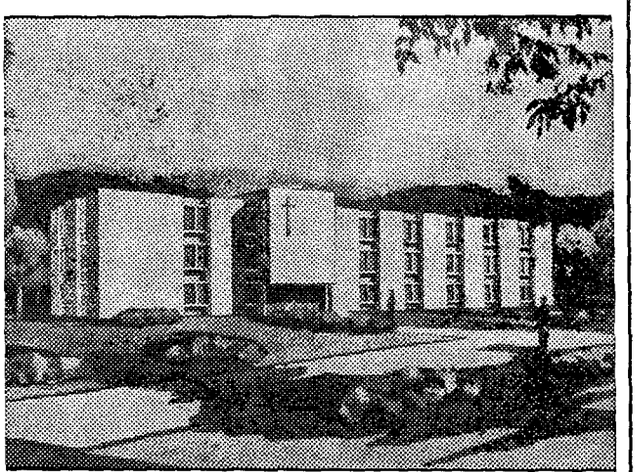

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Some Thoughts on the Short Story—and Its Decline

The Lonely Voice: A Study of the Short Story. By Frank O'Connor. World. $4.

by Saul Maloff

SO GRAVE is the predicament of the short story that it comes as something of a surprise to find a serious critical work—not a textbook, not a manual of technique designed for creative-writing workshops, not an annotated anthology for the gigantic maw of sophomore courses—devoted to it. At that it is a work which confidently assumes the short story to be a living art worth the attention of serious writers and readers, as though we did not live in an age when "fiction" means the novel and nothing else. Yet Frank O'Connor, who is himself, a minor Old Master of the form, has written such a book in *The Lonely Voice.*

Still one is tempted to say that his own is a lonely voice, for the short story has fallen on lean years, perhaps for the reasons which he isolates. His purpose, however, is to define and differentiate, not bury; to attempt, by discovering its distinctive subject matter and its representative voice, to distinguish the short story from all other forms of fiction.

In this country, where the form flourishes far more vigorously than elsewhere, it may seem foolish to speak of it elegiacally, to bury it while Purdy and Powers and Malamud (to cite no others) are still thrashing. All the same, no one is a short-story writer by commitment, by conviction. Even when the writer's talent clearly lies there, the seemingly irresistible pull is toward the novel, for many reasons having less to do with talent than with extrinsic factors. The very brevity of the form would seem to condemn it to minor status, a creation more of editors and the exigencies of magazines than of writers. That writers, even great ones, are among the victims of this view is a fact of literary history: Mr. O'Connor notes that Joyce and Lawrence, among others, sought to "escape" from the "loneliness" of the form.

But his argument is more subtle and more complex than this; and even if the argument is not a total one and does not answer all the questions which may strike one as relevant, Mr. O'Connor's book—modest in length and scope and tone but not in intention—is the only one I know of to get beyond familiar matters of length and focus and intensity and technique, into a *poetics* of the short story. That we have had to wait so long for such a work, even in an age of clinical criticism, tells us much about the form's tenuous and ambiguous status.

The book is organized in the simplest possible way, as an illustrated argument: in an introductory essay which is by far the longest of his chapters, Mr. O'Connor builds his argument, clearly and gracefully, moving for his examples easily and authoritatively among the literature of the genre. Then in each succeeding chapter he examines the achievement of the writers who seem to him the greatest practitioners of the form, pointing as he moves, and creating with each critical gesture the structure of his argument. His central insight, I think, must become part of our conception of the short story as a distinctive literary form.

He puts this insight in many ways, modifying it according to the particularities of obsession and subject matter of a given writer; but in essence it is best conveyed in this representative passage: "The novel can still adhere to the classical concept of civilized society, of man as an animal who lives in a community, as in Jane Austen and Trollope it obviously does; but the short story remains by its very nature remote from the community—romantic, individualistic, and intransigent."

Guided by this view, Mr. O'Connor locates in each of the writers whom he considers, a "submerged population" of characters who live out their encounters and destinies outside, beneath, on the margins of the society which is the novel's traditional ground; as, for example, Gogol's clerks, Turgenev's serfs, Maupassant's whores, Chekhov's doctors and teachers, Sherwood Anderson's lonely provincial dreamers, Joyce's Dubliners, Mansfield's children, Hemingway's waiters, barmen, boxers, jockeys and bullfighters, Babel's Jews. These are the submerged populations who have no other voice than the artist's; without him they would remain forever inarticulate, unillumined and undiscovered.

Now these submerged populations (Mr. O'Connor apologizes for the clumsiness of the term but can find no more suitable one) are there; they typify the short story. But as with all comprehensive statements of this sort, Mr. O'Connor overstates his case, perhaps simply in order to make it. Such characters are not unknown in the traditional novel, though they may not be so prominent; they are very much known to the picaresque novelists, for example. Defoe and Dickens knew them, and Fielding and Smollett; and they are there in abundance throughout the nineteenth-century novel. Nevertheless, we are dealing here with a matter of emphasis and differentiating principle. And, since Mr. O'Connor's purpose is tendentious, namely to classify, he cannot pause to consider evidence that would compel qualification and muting.

All the evidence complicates the picture. The weight of the evidence, however, supports his view; but only, I think, if we limit ourselves to the traditional novel—as, indeed, Mr. O'Connor does. If we look at the contemporary novel, as Mr. O'Connor does not, radical differences emerge, and in such a way as to answer most of the questions he leaves unresolved.

To take only those examples Mr. O'Connor cites in the above quotation, Jane Austen and Trollope could keep the society of their novels "civilized" only by suppressing in them the disintegrative forces within hu-

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man consciousness and within society-at-large. It has not been possible for serious novelists to do this for a long time now; and precisely those forces, admitted into the novel, define its contemporary practice. The netherside of consciousness and the processes of social dissolution are now its familiar ground: we are all a submerged population of the rootless, the insulted and the injured.

Seen this way, it becomes clear why the impulse of the short story has weakened in our time: its traditional ground has been usurped by the novel. In more ways than one, the short-story writer's voice must be a lonely one.

Glory and Gore

The Price of Glory—Verdun 1916. By Alastair Horne. St. Martin's Press. $5.95.

by Alice Ellen Mayhew

SCOTT Fitzgerald said that a hundred years of middle-class love was spent on the Western Front; and D. H. Lawrence that all the "great words were canceled out for that generation" — by disillusion. For France, World War I's four years of brutal, virtual stalemate were an open artery through which she bled nearly to death. A whole generation was, in the words of Etienne Gilson, "Gone. Vanished. Nothing. The purity of their sacrifice does not console us for such losses. Nothing will give us back the spiritual riches that we would have received from them had they lived."

The losses in the Great War were stupefying: in the first month, August 1914, French casualties were over 300,000; by the end of five months, a million, of which 300,000 were dead; by the end of 1915, she had lost half her regular officers. At Ypres, Britain sustained a half-million casualties to gain five miles; on the first day of the Somme, 20,000 British soldiers perished. German and Russian losses were comparable. By the end of the war, the per capita deaths of these nations were: 1-28 France; 1-32 Germany; 1-57 Great Britain; 1-107 Russia.

Verdun, the subject of Alastair Horne's magnificent *The Price of Glory*, was the longest, the most compressed and, proportionately, the bloodiest battle of this war. It was the *Grande Guerre* in microcosm; it became a mystic symbol of suffering, horror, and glory; and it broke the heart of the French Army.

Early in 1916, the Germans initiated a campaign whose stated purpose was to "bleed the French forces to death." After a year and a half of failures and withdrawals, only the fortified city of Verdun stuck out like a tumor on the French line of defense. It was ringed with armored forts, though most of them had been stripped of all movable cannons by Joffre's order (there had been no intention of defending Verdun itself). The Germans' plan was to lure the French Army into a narrow front, an artillery trap where they could be swept on three sides by cannonfire. Presumably, the French would keep throwing their men into this execution gallery.

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heavy German guns, including the new Big Berthas, and 72 elite German battalions were arrayed against a motley collection of 270 antiquated French guns and 34 battalions, at half their complement. Unbelievably, the French held on; and a see-saw, ten-month struggle ensued, with the French conceding, re-attacking, ceding, attacking again. They could have retreated to the left bank of the Meuse and drawn the Germans into a futile advance over carefully drawn lines of defense. But the memory of the War of 1870, when retreats had turned into rout, the demoralization of the French Army after 18 months of failures, the dominant (Grandmaison) theory of War of the French War College (*l'attaque à outrance*—no ground must be ceded) and, above all, the fact that Verdun had become a lethal symbol of French honor, turned this militarily unimportant place into a Calvary, into which three-quarters of the French army were ultimately drawn. The Germans suffered almost as much; and, of course, their strategy failed since it was predicated on inflicting 5-2 losses on the French.

The battle started on February 21, 1916. In the first five days the French lost 25,000 men, 3-1 to the Germans. In the next three days, the Germans made up the difference by losing 17,000 men. The debacle had commenced. Tens of thousands died over the next 10 months re-exchanging hills and woods. On the infamous Côte 304 alone, 10,000 Frenchmen lost their lives.

The infantry was used as cannon fodder. Only Pétain's appointment to command, shortly after the start, saved the French Army from complete disaster. He stood alone against the prevailing theory of incessant, all-out offensive. Pétain was unwilling to pit men against matériel, and the infantry thereafter trusted him. But he did not always have his way. Joffre withheld reinforcements for the sledgehammer drive at the Somme, and even removed more heavy guns. General Nivelle, on the ascendancy, was committed to attack and victory at literally any price and one of his closest advisors, Mangin, was, in Mr. Horne's term, "a killer."

In order to understand what Verdun did to the French Army one must take an unflinching look at the horrors of trench warfare. The infantry *poilus* and their gallant field officers were under constant bombardment by the heaviest guns the world had ever seen. The German shells would sometimes fall, on the area 1,000 yards square, at the rate of one every six seconds. Men were gassed, starving, out of communication with their commands; they were blown up in their trenches before they could get out, and if they escaped, they had to charge through barbed wire into murderous barrages of machine-gun fire that mowed them down by the hundreds. The compressed area of the battlefield was an open, putrefied cemetery in which bodies were constantly interred and disinterred by exploding shells. A Jesuit priest, Paul Dubulle, later killed, wrote, ". . . finally one abandons oneself to it . . . To die from a bullet seems to be nothing . . . but to be dismembered, torn to pieces, reduced to pulp, this is a fear that flesh cannot support . . . Having despaired of living amid such horrors, we begged God not to have us killed—the transition was too atrocious—but just to let us be dead. We had but one desire; the end!"

But the battle went on and on; the Germans mounted several nearly successful drives, but nobody could win. The calamity then seemed to rid itself of human direction and continue under its own impetus, "under an evil, superhuman Will from Styx." During March, April and May, the front never shifted more than 1,000 yards and yet French losses were now at 185,000. The climax came in June. A German attack almost took Verdun city, but the French held, the German commander, Falkenhayn, hesitated (caught between the Crown Prince who knew the campaign was lost and Knobelsdorf, Nivelle's opposite number) and, on June 23rd, the French threw back the German thrust. The following October, a brilliant maneuver by Nivelle won back in one day the terrain taken by the Crown Prince in four and a half months.

Verdun was the first massive artillery battle in which men were hurled against machines. It saw the first (German) flamethrowers, the first use of phosphorescent gas, the initial emergence of a strategic air force. These flyers—and, on the whole, France dominated in the air—were the identifiable heroes amid this drab war of amorphous anonymity, and even the men in the trenches watched their Grecian duels.

There were, of course, other legendary heroes: Raynal in Fort Vaux; Colonel Driant who practically singlehandedly held up the German advance on the second, crucial day of the battle. Marshall Pétain, who was to be tragically dishonored in the next war, saved what was left of the French Army, but he emerged from Verdun with a deadly, fatalistic

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pessimism which was to ruin him. The French Army had its back and its spirit broken and, though Pétain cured the Mutinies in 1917, the rest of the main burden of the war was to fall on the British. Because three-quarters of the French Army passed through this hell, Verdun left its mark on the army. It had not recovered by 1940—and the mark was long visible in the spectacle of the morally isolated, defeat-ridden French troops fighting abortive and suicidal colonial campaigns. In Indochina, in cement batteries surrounding a delta (an arrangement that resembled the forts of Verdun), a garrison of French soldiers fought to the last man at Dien Bien Phu. This was the price, as David Jones wrote, of "Riders on pale horses loosed/ and vials irreparably broken/ an' Wat price bleedin' Glory/Glory/ Glory Hallelujah. . . ."

A Dilettante Makes His Way in New York

Young Crankshaw. By Cecil Hemley. Harcourt, Brace. $4.50.

by William James Smith

THIS IS a novel that stands or falls on a single sentence. That sentence is the last one in the book. I think it falls, but the problem has puzzled me out of all proportion, and that may have been another sort of success that Mr. Hemley was aiming at.

Recently I attended a Broadway opening of a play that I knew absolutely nothing about. I detested it nearly all the way through because I did not realize until near the end that it was just a simple mystery-melodrama and not the incredibly stilted romance I thought I was watching. If I were able to see it again the crudities of construction and dialogue might have been forgivable. The damage was done, however, and the fault was really the author's because he did not make clear what he was doing in the lines of the play itself.

The situation is the reverse with *Young Crankshaw*. The very title itself suggests a bright young comedy, the jacket doesn't do much to alter this impression, and the first two-thirds of the book move along more or less in this vein. Then dismay begins to set in. Is this a bright young comedy? A wry comedy? A tragi-comedy? Up to the very last sentence it is possible to say, well, maybe Mr. Hemley is working out a new combination, keep an open mind. And then the roof falls in.

See what you make of it. Mr. Hemley's hero is Young Crankshaw, a well-to-do dilettante in New York in the 1930's. He and all his friends are Trotskyites or other left-wing deviationists of rarer persuasion. Into his group comes a swaggering "Boho" named Jim Rafferty, up from Youngstown, Ohio to make his way in the Big City as a poet. Rafferty seduces everybody's girl friend, takes horrendous advantage of everyone, and ends up repudiating his buddies when he makes it big as the librettist of a left-wing opera.

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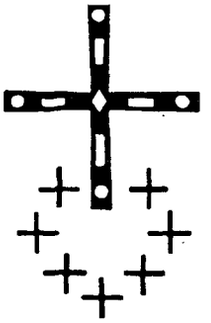

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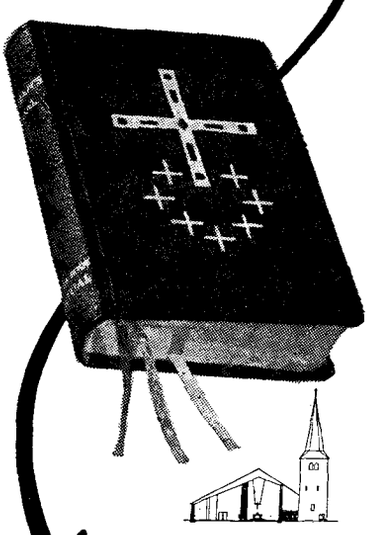

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to me an inspired comic idea. Mr. Hemley does some amusing things with it, no guffaws but a good many smiles. And Rafferty emerges as more than a mere comic figure: a character of real vitality and conviction and an object of detestation. But that is just about as far as you can push it and that is not enough for Mr. Hemley. He asks Rafferty to bear a symbolic weight which Rafferty simply is not up to. To use Mr. Eliot's grand old term, there is no objective correlative for the emotion we are asked to summon up for Rafferty.

We are asked to believe, in short, that "If there is no God, then Rafferty is the world." And it just won't do. It has the terrible earmarks of one of those fatal errors in skill that cracks the marble right down to the ground or with a single hurried brush stroke makes a daub out of a competent canvas. I tremble with anguish to think that Mr. Hemley might have added that final sentence in a moment of exhilaration at having finished his novel, feeling that the work suddenly had greater stature than he had supposed. I cannot believe that he was working toward that line. If he was, the fault is all the more grievous because he has not led up to it. Mr. Hemley put all his eggs in one basket and the bottom dropped out.

Maybe the occasion is one for reflection upon the gallantry of art. There is a certain *panache* to Mr. Hemley's gesture—the harlequin which flips the dancer off the stage, the blackbirds Van Gogh flecked into his last canvas, the rightful audacity with which Shirley Jackson wrote the last lines of "The Lottery," the dissonance at the end of Ravel's "Bolero." Mr. Hemley made his *grand jeté* and if it ended in a pratfall he deserves at least a round of applause for having gotten up there in the first place.

But, to put an end to the sentimentality, *Young Crankshaw* is not all that good a book. Mr. Hemley is a poet as well as a novelist, but his prose is singularly lacking in color, and his architectural skill as a writer comes in doubt on more scores than the vital one. His treatment of the left-wing politics of the 1930's, for example, sounds reasonably well-enough informed, but the whole subject is really irrelevant to the novel. Crankshaw is not alienated from his friends on political grounds but sheerly as a matter of bourgeois practicality, and Rafferty could just as well have been a Black Shirter. Politics in the book is a mere matter of period color and something for the characters to chat about when they are not indulging in sleazy sexual intrigues.

Well, try it leaving out the last sentence, and then putting it in. Maybe it was all a matter of my having gotten off on the wrong foot. I really would like to think so.

Light on Newman

Newman: Light in Winter. By Meriol Trevor. Doubleday. $7.95.

by Martin J. Svaglic

THE APPEARANCE of the second half of Meriol Trevor's massive biography of Newman so soon after the first is a phenomenon in itself. And though it seems unlikely that any reader will find himself as affected by the author's style as Gladstone was by Newman's—it was so exciting, he said, that it made him wish to shout and do something extravagant—still, it is far from pedestrian. Miss Trevor is a skilled reporter with an enviable gift for the exposition of complex material in language apparently effortless and, when dealing with Newman himself, almost unfailingly to the point. It is only when she has to turn her attention to other people that her preoccupation with Newman may betray her sense and sensibility, so that she can describe Frederick Bowles, for instance, as "a nervous, musical, unpredictable man," or Newman's critics in words not merely inadequate but verging on the mean.

Her biography remains nicely complementary to Wilfrid Ward's, his being concerned more with Newman's ideas and significance for a skeptical world; and hers, while by no means ignoring these matters, dwelling rather on the complex human life that Ward barely touched on: the strained family relations, the holidays at Deal and on the Continent, the defections within the Ora-

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tory, playing second violin with the schoolboy orchestra, the fondness for Trollope and the nausea at East Lynne, the discovery that one of his clerical schoolmasters was a thief and roué, the fascination with every kind of animal, the matters of health that no Victorian would commit to print: the urinary infections, the swollen ankles, and the bad teeth.

Even in advanced old age, Newman looked at the world with a sense of wonder and wry humor that enchanted his close friends. Artist that he was, the smallest details caught his eye and sprang to vivid life in his letters and conversation. Professor Robertson's false teeth, for example, he found "visible to the naked eye; not so bad however as William Wilberforce's . . . who throws the whole set out of the gums upon his tongue, and chews them, as an infant might a coral. I never saw anything so strange."

All along the line Miss Trevor has added to the information that Wilfrid Ward gave us. Thus we can learn more from Ward about the critical principles underlying Newman's proposed translation of the Bible, but it is Miss Trevor who makes clearer what brought the project to a halt. Above all, her book is a biography of Newman the Oratorian, the one vital aspect of his life hitherto neglected.

In 1855, without consulting Newman as head of the Birmingham Oratory, Father Faber's London house applied to Rome for a change in rule enabling their community, at Wiseman's request, to hear the confessions of nuns. When Newman quite naturally and vigorously protested, since any decision of Propaganda would not only affect his own house but probably confirm Rome in the feeling that London was the center of and spokesman for Oratory life in England, an estrangement developed between the two communities that persisted for years and led to the damaging belief in Westminister and Rome that Newman was unduly alert for slights and something of a despot, benevolent only when he had his way.

To this highly complex story Ward devoted two pages, saying that "so little is to be found among [New-

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man's] papers relating to the subject, that I do not think he desired that any full account of it should ever be made public." He was quite wrong about the material available, at any rate, and Miss Trevor spends nearly a hundred pages on an affair that is bound to strike many readers as badly managed on Newman's part, no matter how true it undoubtedly is that he was the injured party, essentially in the right.

Miss Trevor quotes with approval Newman's remark that "no more than an individual can a community exist in absolute perfection on earth," but she refuses to admit that it applies not only to his fellow Oratorians but to Newman himself, who was an unsparing self-critic, confessing at one time or another to pride, petty tyranny, undue sensitivity, and a deficiency in the art of government: "Thou couldst a people raise but couldst not rule."

Today Newman stands out as the model ecumenist of the modern world, whose life is a paradigm for the educated Catholic and in whom we clearly see, with his bishop, a saint of God. But he was first of all a fully human being; and after watching Meriol Trevor shut her eyes more than once to this simple fact, so reassuring to weaker souls who otherwise might despair altogether, it is with a mixture of relief and delight that we come on his close friend Maria Giberne's view of the "row": It was just like him, she thought, for "when he was young, he always had a shocking temper."

It would be churlish, however, to end on a discordant note. The book is simply indispensable to every student of Newman. Well written, profusely illustrated, rich in insight and information, *Newman: Light in Winter* is worthy of its great subject.

Thinking Back

What is Remembered. By Alice B. Toklas. Holt, Rinehart and Winston. $4.

by Jean Holzhauer

GERTRUDE STEIN was a legend during her lifetime. The legend was compounded of literary daring, a

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quick artistic perception, spinster intransigence, and Miss Alice B. Toklas, whose *Autobiography* was the vehicle for Miss Stein's self-introduction to most American readers.

Of the legend's ingredients, Gertrude Stein's writing and Miss Toklas' survive. Now Miss Toklas speaks up in her own voice, though not for the first time: there are the famous *Alice B. Toklas Cookbooks,* as much reminiscences as recipes. Not surprisingly, the voice and the taste are echoes of Gertrude Stein: firm, sensible-romantic, and tart. Characteristic is a recollection of the ladies' American tour of 1935:

"We also visited Washington and were taken to the White House, where we were received by Mrs. Roosevelt. The President was indisposed, she announced, to which Gertrude blandly said, "Yes." Mrs. Roosevelt then informed us that one of the officials would receive us in his stead, to which Gertrude again said, "Yes." Miss Toklas adds, "He was a well-known official, but I have no recollection of who he was."

Some critics have complained of the slightness of *What Is Remembered.* This seems an unfortunate and mistaken disappointment, since Miss Toklas has no need to create a public monument to her friend and writes instead from the usual grab-bag of lifetime recollections, on the principle that these records are important to *her.* Like Miss Stein, Miss Toklas depends more on the effects of an original personality—on style and tone—than on content.

For example, this bit, also about the American tour, served up with Gertrude's own acid elegance: "At Times Square I saw an electric light revolving. It said Gertrude Stein has arrived in New York, Gertrude Stein has arrived in New York. As if we did not know it."

In Chicago, "When the discussion was over . . . Mr. [Mortimer] Adler said, I never saw students so ready to talk as you made them. Oh they always talk, said Gertrude Stein, they like to talk. Not for us, said Mr. Adler."

Unexpectedly, Miss Toklas notes that Robert Hutchins and Adler "thought she had allowed the students too much freedom. Both of them suggested that she should tell them what to think, to form their thoughts for them, and she replied, I have always allowed young people to formulate their own ideas."

What Is Remembered is handsomely illustrated with photographs and drawings, chiefly of the two remarkable women who dominate, as doubtless they did in life, their friends. The careful reader will find also some rather touching *obligato* notes: the scene where Byron, a Chihuahua, is introduced to the household and Miss Stein's famous poodle, Basket I, flies to the gate in a jealous rage. "When we discovered this, Gertrude and I both ran out and brought him back, trying not to let him be jealous any more."

And even more hauntingly, in describing a Madame Pierlot: "She remembered everything. Gertrude used to say that she had a memory that rivaled mine. But she had things to remember."

REVIEWERS

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